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Document Delivery: An Analysis



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Abstract

This paper will take a look at in-house document delivery activities in college research libraries. The process of document delivery will be explained and the amount of work at one institution will be displayed. An examination of Association of Research Libraries (ARL) members will also take place to see who is providing document delivery and if the patron is charged. Lastly, a commentary on the value and service provided and things to consider will be touched on.

Introduction

Document delivery can mean different things at different college libraries across the country and worldwide. Some libraries view document delivery in its simplest terms and see it as providing an article or book chapter to a patron. Other libraries see it as a means of supplementing their collection and allow patrons to order documents directly from a commercial provider when the need arises. Still other libraries see document delivery as a service that allows patrons to request materials from their home library and have them delivered in a selected format. The real distinction comes into play when you consider where the document is originating from; whether it is located in the patron's home library or another library owns the document. This investigation will concentrate on the former view and look at document delivery as a service of providing articles or book chapters that the library already owns to its patrons.

Literature Review

Document delivery is frequently researched by librarians and other academic scholars and published in library journals, books, and other educational resources. The most common topic dealing with document delivery concerns the access versus ownership debate. Jaswal states, "librarians all over the world are having to think rationally in terms of ownership versus access. Librarians now, out of necessity, are moving away from the traditional concept of ownership and becoming more aggressive in providing their patrons with information not stored locally on open shelves of their libraries" (p. 82, 2000). Boyle & Davies state, "The crucial aspect in the entire access/holdings debate

is that of cost effectiveness: which particular information service options, and in what circumstances, are cheaper" (p. 106, 1999). Another hot topic dealing with document delivery is unmediated access. Prowse points out, "The growing provision of document supply services that can deliver straight to end-users inevitably leads libraries to question whether they should go down this route for at least some of their ILL requests" (p. 190, 2000).

Davies states, "Document delivery operations centered on end-user delivery represents a relatively new component in information supply. Most feature electronic source item identification and ordering systems, perhaps based on database searching. As such they incorporate mechanisms for individual billing either through credit cards, prepayment, or in some cases, deposit accounts" (p. 323, 1998). Unmediated access means patrons can order articles or other documents directly from proprietary document providers without going through the interlibrary loan office and the university still subsidizes the cost for the patron. Regardless of how you view document delivery one thing remains clear: it is a busy department. Jaswal explains, "with the support of new information technologies, ILL and document delivery are fast becoming the hub of all activities in a library" (p. 83, 2000).

Sayed, Murraray, and Wheeler state, "Expansion of the Internet, full-text electronic journals and materials along with increased access to technology and the Internet have all contributed to patrons increased expectations of instant delivery to their desktops of full-text materials" (p. 71, 2001). They also found that "resource sharing and an efficient document delivery process continue to play an important role in meeting library patron's information needs" (p.71).

Dekker and Waaijers provide five requirements for document delivery in their article "Beyond the photocopy machine: document delivery in a hybrid library environment". They state that:

"(1) the customer of document delivery should not have the bother of having to use specific tools that are not already available in his existing professional environment (2) customers will expect us to deliver anywhere, at any time, in any format, (3) document delivery is solely about getting the document there. It is not about searching and finding information, (4) document delivery should be a transparent service, (5) paper is going to be with us for a while" (p. 70, 200).

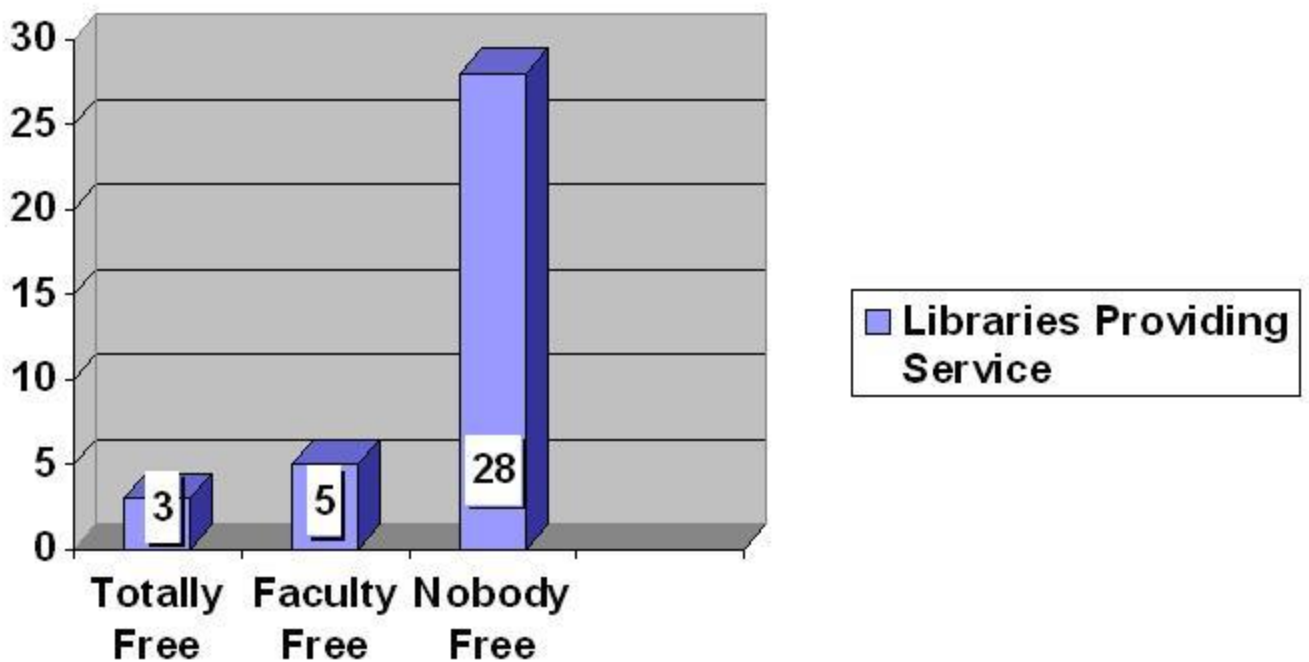
All of these requirements make perfect sense and have both the patron and department in mind. Users should not have to learn complex new systems or acquire new equipment to view the material. At the same time document delivery departments need to concentrate on delivering the materials and not searching or verifying citations for the patrons. Their last requirement about paper is a fact, people are still using paper and they are most comfortable with that medium.

Methods

The research for this study was obtained by visiting library websites on the WWW and gleaning information from them. The ARL website provided a listing of all their members and the members' website addresses. Due to the fact that libraries are all about connecting patrons to information, the facts needed for this study were all readily available on the library websites. The participants for this study were public universities in the United States who belong to ARL. "ARL is a not-for-profit membership organization comprising the leading research libraries in North America. Its mission is to shape and influence forces affecting the future of research libraries in the process of scholarly communication. ARL programs and services promote equitable access to and effective use of recorded knowledge in support of teaching, research, scholarship, and community service. There are currently more than 120 members" (ARL, 2003). Public universities who belong to ARL were chosen because of their similar research missions and public funding resources. Sixty-five libraries were selected for the study.

Results

Of the 65 libraries selected 36 or 55% were found to have a document delivery service while 29 or 45% did not. Fifteen of the 37 libraries that have a document delivery service offer it to only faculty and staff, not students. Only 3 or 5% of the libraries offer the service free of charge to students and another 8 or 12% offer it free of charge to faculty and staff; the rest charge the patron for the service. The cost of the service for faculty, staff, and students varied greatly from institution to institution. The prices ranged from a low 10 cents per page to a \$10 flat fee per article or chapter. Seventeen of the libraries that charge for the service are charging between \$3 and \$5 dollars per article. Some libraries that did not offer the service did list it as an option for only disabled students or distance learning students.



Discussion

The benefits of an in-house document delivery service are easy to see. Faculty, staff, and students can use this service as a convenience and time saver. Instead of hunting through the library stacks, they can send requests to the library electronically and receive the journal article or book chapters through their email in a few days. Nontraditional students and distance learners will come to depend on document delivery and see it as a necessity. Fuller found in his library at the University of Florida that "the document delivery service has expanded with the educational needs and growth involving the distance education movement" (p.53, 2001).

There are many factors to consider when contemplating document delivery. Technology is one factor you must always consider in today's library world. As Baker points out, "the technologies of recent years have not just improved access to different media and content. They have changed or are changing the face of publishing and of the research and teaching/learning endeavor, as for example, recent discussions regarding e-prints suggest" (p. 107, 2003). If electronic publishing continues to increase, as well as electronic journal subscriptions, the need for document delivery provided by libraries may slowly diminish.

Another factor to consider is the cost of providing document delivery. Even if the library is not charging the patron for document delivery somebody is still paying for. The old saying goes "there is no such thing as a free lunch." The library is paying for in-house

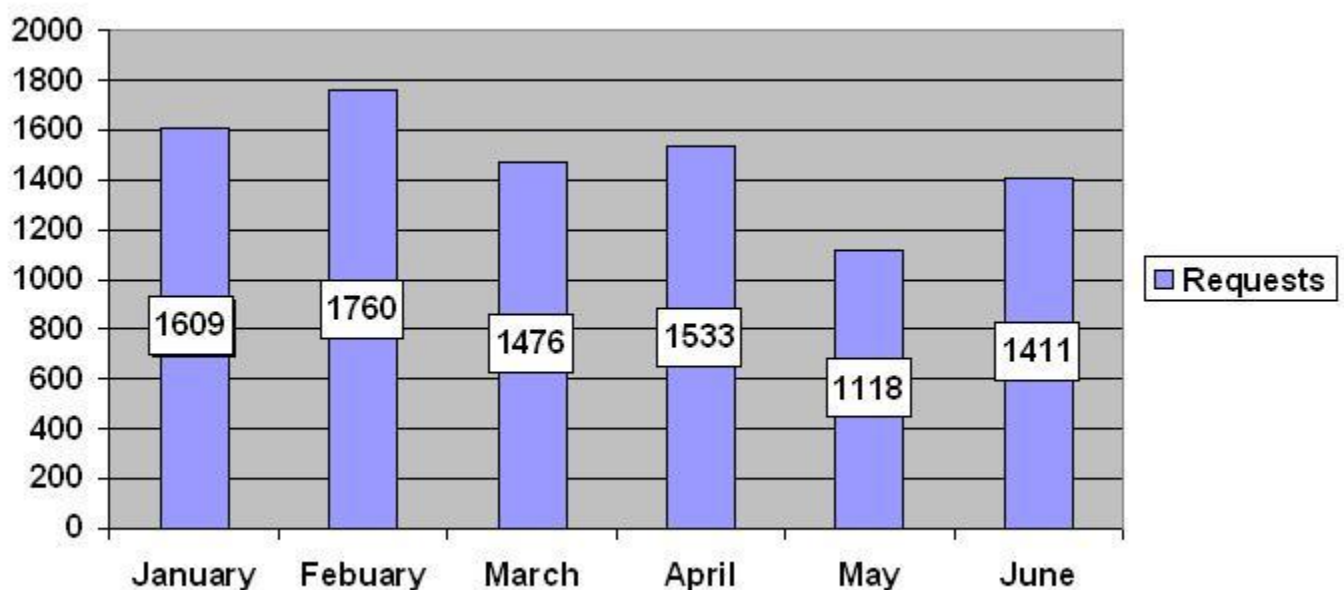
document delivery through the manpower it is expending. Although a lot of the workload is carried out by college student workers it still carries a cost. Most college student workers are either part-time hired help or federal work-study. Hepker explains work-study was "created by the federal government, work-study is meant to help with a college student's overall financial aid package" (p. 58, 2000). The library pays for one fourth of the work-study student's salary and financial aid pays the rest. Students usually work between 10 to 20 hours per week and earn between \$5 to \$6 an hour. Without document delivery the library could potentially use the manpower in other areas of the library. Student workers often work in the circulation department, interlibrary loan, and stacks maintenance. There is equipment required for document delivery too. Scanners and computers are the must haves to make the operation functional. It seems many libraries are charging their patrons for the service, especially the students. Students will have to weigh the convenience factor against the cost and make a decision about using the service or not. The libraries that are charging for their service probably receive less requests but the cost of the service probably does not support the operation.

Interlibrary loan and document delivery departments are especially aware of copyright laws. College libraries have always taken notice of copyright laws and have had to work within the laws and at the same time try to provide services to their patrons. Copyright in its constitutional form balances the rights and needs of those who create original works, those who use those creations - readers, listeners, viewers--and those that create new works based in part on what came before (Crawford, 2002).

Under Section 108(a), photocopying by libraries and archives is not an infringement if the copying meets three criteria: the reproduction is made without direct commercial advantage, collections are open to the public, and the reproduction of the work includes a notice of copyright (Dukelow, 1992). Section 107 of the US Copyright Act on Fair Use expanded on these exceptions. Fair use comes into play under four factors: the purpose and character of the use--whether it is for commercial or education purposes, the nature of the copyrighted work, the amount and substantiality of the portion used, and the effect of the use upon the potential market value.

The Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) was enacted in 1998 and updated copyright law to address the growing use of computers and the Internet. This copyright act pays special attention to Internet service providers, distance learning, and works that appear in digital format. Some people are critics of this new law because "the DMCA has not sufficiently addressed the digital environment, because digital technologies continue to evolve at a rapid pace" (Russel, 2001). Technology has made copying and distributing materials considerably easier, but copyright laws still need to be followed by document delivery and inter-library loan departments.

The Ralph Brown Draughon Library at Auburn University offers document delivery to faculty, staff, and graduate students. The service is offered free of charge to all eligible users, but a maximum of five requests per day will be processed for a patron. There is an electronic system in place where the patrons log in using their library barcode number to ensure they are currently registered or employed with the university. Patrons then fill out the form and submit it to the document delivery office in the library. The staff proceeds to verify the request against the catalog to make sure the library does have a subscription in print format. If the library only has an electronic subscription the user's request will be returned, since they can access the article themselves from their desktop. Student workers then proceed to the library stacks to retrieve the journals and bring them back to the department to scan the articles and send them off to the patron. There are 14 student workers assigned to the interlibrary loan and document delivery service department and 2 full time employees. The policies for the service state that turnaround time is between 48 and 72 hours after the department receives the request. The following chart shows the number of requests processed from January of 2003 through the end of June of 2003.



An in-house document delivery operation serves as a great resource to library patrons. Patrons can obtain materials they need from the library without ever making a trip to the library, searching the stacks, or making photocopies. The convenience of the service does come at a cost to the library and it will need to weigh the service benefit against the staffing demands placed on the library.

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